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SUBJECT: NEA PDAS CHENEY'S PRESS COVERAGE IN BAHRAIN

1. PDAS Elizabeth Cheney conducted a press roundtable during her May 10 visit to Bahrain to discuss the Forum for the Future and U.S. support for democracy in the region. Press reports on May 11 generally reflected the editorial slant of the Bahraini media with pro-government papers focusing on Cheney's positive comments about Bahrain's reforms, and independent newspaper Al Wasat highlighting her remarks about the need for continued political openness.

2. Pro-government Al-Ayam and Bahrain Tribune both headlined, "US Official Praises Kingdom's Openness and Freedom," and Gulf Daily News headlined, "US Hails Bahrain Reforms" and "Process of Change in the Arab World Praised." Al Wasat wrote about the plans for the Forum for the Future and Cheney's comments on the need for continued political reforms and economic openness. Al Wasat also highlighted the important role that civil societies hope to play in the Forum. Many of Al Wasat's reporters are active in non-governmental or political organizations, and their coverage tends to reflect their involvement in reform issues.

3. Press coverage of Cheney's meeting with Shaikha Sabika, wife of the King, and other leading Bahraini women, reinforced the important role of women in Bahrain's society. Press stories centered on the goals of MEPI's women's pillar, including the role of Bahraini women in civil society, and preparations for increased women's involvement in the 2006 Municipal Council and Parliamentary elections. All Bahraini newspapers quoted Cheney's remarks hailing the experience of Bahraini women as evidenced by their leading positions in the government and society.

Monroe